

## Investing to Enhance Community Capacity

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- I'd like to address a dimension of your charge relating to long term system financing—something that hasn't yet received much attention in your discussions although it has probably been implicit.
- In making long term system financing projections, service costs are obviously the core. But it's also important that you look at what infrastructure investments are necessary to enhance community capacity.
- As you know, the legislature's vision for the system includes "resiliency and recovery for Iowans with mental illness and the ability of Iowans with disabilities to live, learn, work, and recreate *in communities of their choice...*" You affirmed system transformation principles to implement this vision at your last meeting. But as we all know, Iowa's system is still more reliant than it should be on institutional services and there are barriers that block our capacity to support people with mental illness or other disabilities to live fully integrated lives in the community.
- One frame of reference I have on this issue is CDD's partnership with DHS in the implementation of Iowa's Money Follows the Person grant. In fact, the implementation of MFP is an on-going barriers needs assessment and confirms what many Iowa stakeholders report.
- There isn't time for a detailed discussion, so I'll only cite a few examples of barriers MFP brings to light:
  - the need for behavioral programming, crisis intervention services (including in-home crisis services), and follow along services to make sure a behavior plan is working.
  - the need for direct services staff training in areas like positive behavior supports; crisis prevention; and understanding the impact of dual diagnoses. Many guardians are afraid to look at other community options because of the lack of trained staff and fear of turnover. It is well known that improving training will also cut down on turnover.
  - the need for the availability of low cost, accessible housing and funding of waiver rent subsidies. As you know, Iowa created the Waiver Rent Subsidy program administered by the Iowa Finance Authority to assist transitioning individuals on the waiting list for a HUD voucher (as well as individuals at risk of returning to an institution). As of September 18, there is now a waiting list for the rent subsidy program.
  - the need for a timely, accessible, and efficient transportation system that enables individuals to fully participate in their communities.
  - the need for competitive employment to replace our reliance on pre-vocational services and sheltered workshops.
  - the need for implementation of a statewide functional assessment system to identify an individual's support needs and create an appropriate and "right-sized" budget.
  - the need for robust information and referral, navigation supports, and

case management services. Many guardians are afraid to look at community options because services they remember how hard they struggled to find services and supports years ago when they placed their loved one.

Although my frame of reference is MFP (which supports individuals with intellectual disabilities), these barriers are similar to those that complicate efforts to support Iowans with mental illness. For example, you know well the need for more crisis stabilization beds.

- Significant efforts are underway to address these needs. For example:
  - DHS is using Real Choices System Transformation grant dollars to fund access to the on-line College of Direct Support for providers participating in MFP. That grant is also funding regional Positive Behavioral Supports train-the-trainer workshops that augment on-line training. In addition, the MFP grant is supporting Crisis Prevention Interventions training.  
*However, access to these types of training must be available statewide on an on-going basis.* It is problematic for HCBS providers to arrange for such training themselves and cover the cost under the administrative cap.
  - The IME is working on a transportation brokerage (as authorized by the legislature last year) that would have the potential to improve system efficiency.
- During your last meeting, Bill Gardam talked about his Division's Mental Health and Disability Services Plan process. Among other things, this plan will highlight many aspects of community capacity building, and the stakeholder input process will help identify priorities for action.
- So as you think about long term system financing issues, consider the need for investments beyond the cost of services. I keep using the word "investment" because it's the right word--there will be a return in terms of savings when we become less reliant on higher cost alternatives.
- Where will the money for the investment come from?
  - Bob Lincoln's presentation was a very impressive story of how a county consortium is addressing the need to enhance community capacity.
  - Individual counties have also done impressive things.
  - But in my opinion, the state legislature will ultimately need to make a greater contribution. Hopefully, it will continue to be possible to finance the cost of some infrastructure improvements by leveraging federal grant dollars. But the state must own the community capacity building challenge and that is something you are well positioned to encourage.